

*AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS*

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1. (Currently Amended) A printing sleeve comprising a printing layer, a compressible layer, and a circumferential stiffening layer having a thickness not exceeding 0.5 mm and a Young's modulus in the circumferential direction of at least 400 MPa, wherein the circumferential stiffening layer is located between the compressible layer and printing layer.

2. (Previously Presented) The printing sleeve according to Claim 1, including, on a radially internal surface of the compressible layer, a removal facilitating layer.

3. (Currently Amended) The sleeve according to Claim 1 wherein the circumferential stiffening layer is ~~a reinforcing layer~~ on the compressible layer as a reinforcing layer.

4. (Currently Amended) The printing sleeve according to Claim 3, wherein the ~~reinforcing layer has~~ circumferential stiffening layer includes reinforcing elements ~~in the form of one~~ selected from the group consisting of fibers, wires, a knit, a fabric, and a screen, in a matrix of a thermosetting or a thermoplastic polymer.

5. (Previously Presented) The printing sleeve according to Claim 4, wherein the reinforcing elements have a single directional arrangement and are oriented generally circumferentially.

6. (Currently Amended) The printing sleeve according to Claim 4, wherein the matrix is 20-80 wt% of the ~~reinforcing~~ circumferential stiffening layer, and the reinforcing elements are 80-20 wt% of the ~~reinforcing~~ circumferential stiffening layer.

7. (Previously Presented) The printing sleeve according to Claim 4, wherein the reinforcing elements are selected from the group consisting of carbon, glass, high modulus polyester, and aramide.

8. (Currently Amended) The printing sleeve according to Claim 3, wherein the ~~reinforcing circumferential stiffening~~ layer has a thickness ~~between 0.2-0.5~~ larger than 0.2 mm.

9. (Currently Amended) The printing sleeve according to Claim 3, wherein the ~~reinforcing circumferential stiffening~~ layer has a Young's modulus in the circumferential direction ~~between 400-100,000~~ not exceeding 100,000 MPa.

10. (Currently Amended) The printing sleeve according to Claim 4, wherein the matrix of the ~~reinforcing circumferential stiffening~~ layer has a Young's modulus between ~~50-1000~~ 50 and 1,000 MPa.

11. (Currently Amended) The printing sleeve according to ~~one of~~ Claim 4, wherein the ~~reinforcing circumferential stiffening~~ layer has an elongation at breakage in a circumferential direction of the ~~reinforcing circumferential stiffening~~ layer greater than 1.2%.

12. (Currently Amended) The printing sleeve according to Claim 4, wherein the ~~reinforcing circumferential stiffening~~ layer has a Young's modulus in a radial direction between ~~50-500~~ 50 and 500 MPa.

13. (Currently Amended) The printing sleeve according to Claim 4, wherein the ~~reinforcing circumferential stiffening~~ layer has a Young's modulus in a direction parallel to an axis of the reinforcing layer greater than 100 MPa.

14. (Previously Presented) The printing sleeve according to Claim 2, wherein the compressible layer is an elastomer base containing microspheres and at least one expansion agent.

15. (Previously Presented) The printing sleeve according to Claim 14, wherein the compressible layer includes one uniform layer or several superposed under-layers of different compressibilities.

16. (Previously Presented) The printing sleeve according to Claim 14, wherein the compressible layer is produced by one of coating, spraying, and spray gunning of the elastomer base dissolved in a solvent.

17. (Previously Presented) The printing sleeve according to Claim 14, wherein the elastomer base is an endless layer of a sheet rolled on itself or in a helicoidal strip.

18. (Previously Presented) The printing sleeve according to Claim 14, wherein the compressible layer is molded and calibrated in thickness on a removal facilitating film.

19. (Previously Presented) The printing sleeve according to Claim 14, wherein the compressible layer is molded and rectified after expansion.

20. (Currently Amended) The printing sleeve according to Claim 2, wherein the removal facilitating layer is one of an elastomeric and a plastic polymer.

21. (Currently Amended) The printing sleeve according to Claim 2, wherein the removal facilitating layer is produced during the manufacturing of the sleeve by applying one of a gel coat~~a~~ and a paint on a peripheral surface after a removal facilitating agent has been applied.

22. (Previously Presented) The printing sleeve according to Claim 2, wherein the removal facilitating layer is a heat-shrinkable tube.

23. (Previously Presented) The printing sleeve according to Claim 2, wherein the removal facilitating layer is an electrostatically or thermally projected layer of a powder.

24. (Previously Presented) The printing sleeve according to Claim 2, wherein the removal facilitating layer is sufficiently smooth to promote slipping of the sleeve off and on a support sleeve.

25. (Currently Amended) The printing sleeve according to Claim 2, wherein the removal facilitating layer has a modulus of ~~5-800~~ 5 to 800 MPa, a thickness of ~~0.02-0.1~~ 0.02 to 0.1 mm, and a surface with an Ra factor less than 0.5 microns.

26. (Currently Amended) The printing sleeve according to Claim 2, wherein the removal facilitating layer has a friction coefficient on steel or on composite resin between ~~0.2-0.5~~ 0.2 and 0.5.

27. (Previously Presented) The printing sleeve according to Claim 1, wherein the printing layer has a thickness less than 0.5 mm.

28. (New) A printing sleeve comprising a printing layer, a compressible layer, and circumferential reinforcing composite material having a total thickness between 0.2-0.5 mm and a Young's modulus in the circumferential direction between 400-100,000 MPa, wherein the reinforcing composite material is located between the compressible layer and the printing layer.